

Co-op Fairtrade Projects 2020

Case studies of Co-op Future of Food Sourcing Projects with Fairtrade producer communities in 2020

We're committed to building on our Fairtrade leadership and strengthening producer communities around the world, as set out in our Future of Food ambition.

Producer engagement is the cornerstone of our Co-op difference on Fairtrade – the depth and authenticity of our relationship with producers, and investment in climate change resilience and international development projects that change lives.

In 2020 we delivered 5 planned **Co-op Future of Food Sourcing Projects** despite the pandemic, investing in international development and climate change resilience of Fairtrade communities. This has resulted in:

- Cocoa: Women's empowerment and leadership - a second cohort of students graduated from the Women's School of Leadership, which we've funded in Cote d'Ivoire.
- Roses: Education – Renovation of the Maua Primary School, Kenya.
- Coffee: Building climate change resilience and training young farmers at the Mutira Co-operative in Kenya, as part of the Fairtrade East Africa Youth Programme
- Coffee: Raising health and safety in the Health in Field programme at Dos Costas Co-operative Brazil.
- Sugar: Protecting workers rights in Good Hiring Practices in the Cane Farming Sector, Belize.

Read more about these projects in the following pages and in [our annual report](#).



Cocoa | Women's School of Leadership | Côte d'Ivoire

Women's empowerment

Co-op are proud to have supported Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership (WSOL) since 2017. Women are a vital part of West African cocoa farming. In Côte d'Ivoire, women represent 68% of the workforce involved in cocoa farming as owners or workers yet, despite their essential role, they are often invisible, disempowered and marginalised.

WSOL is a training, mentoring and coaching programme that supports participants' gain basic skills in leadership, business skills, decision making, human rights and gender issues in their own environment. Through the training, women, and some men, are empowered to take control of their lives through increased confidence capacities to make decisions and act on themselves; take control and manage resources by being supported to actively participate and voluntarily assume leadership roles in their producer organisations and their communities.

In 2020, 40 people (32 women and 8 men) from 7 Fairtrade cocoa co-operatives graduated from Year 2 of this pioneering programme. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the restrictive measures in force in the country, the graduation ceremony of the participants took place online on 14 July 2020. Co-op were proud to attend and celebrate the achievements of the Y2 graduates.

Participants, under the guidance of the WSOL project team, also conducted training within 36 communities from the participating co-operatives. A total of 2589 people were reached, 2149 women and 449 men. These indirect beneficiaries received information and learning on WSOL annual curricula.

"I was lucky to attend the Fairtrade Africa Women's School of Leadership. This training programme helps women cocoa farmers, we learn a lot of things that help me to have more courage to express my leadership within the women's association, giving me more ideas to build a strong association."
N'guessan Amenan Thérèse, SOCASIB co-operative.

"I have always believed that it takes a lot of money to start a project, but with what I have learnt, I realize that the most important think is in the planning and in the goals you set. Everybody can start a project with a little money and lots of self-confidence" Flé Victorienne, CAUD co-operative

Co-op will continue to help fund the WSOL as it enters its third phase in 2021, and we look forward to seeing the results of the scaling up of this programme and hearing from the women who benefit.



CPRCANAAN Students awareness Tour at PK12 Community



Implementation of income-generating activities with the women's association of cooperative SCAANIAS

Roses | Maua primary school renovation | Kenya

Education

Co-op were the first retailer to only use 100% Fairtrade roses when sourced from Africa. We're also the first to sign up to the new International Fairtrade Sourcing Ingredients model for flowers. Many of Co-op's beautiful Fairtrade roses are grown around Lake Naivasha. We've invested with our supplier Flamingo Flowers to invest in better futures for children of Fairtrade flower workers in Naivasha, Kenya.

Maua Primary School is in Hell's Gate ward in Naivasha. The school is a mixed day-only school in Nakuru county, sponsored by the government, and run in partnership with Flamingo Horticulture. In 2019 the school, which was then attended by 850 pupils aged 6 to 14, was identified as desperately needing essential repairs. 22 classrooms were in use but dilapidated, and a further 4 had been closed because they were uninhabitable.

In partnership with Co-op, the school has undergone transformation providing a much improved learning environment for pupils and teachers with 26 renovated classrooms, with floors, windows, repainted, with equipment. The final phase is to demolish an old building to allow the construction of a modern library.

The renovation has benefitted the community and seen an increase in pupil enrolment at the school to 958, improved attendance and the improved learning environment has had an impact on learning outcomes increasing the average performance per child by 17.62 points from 2019. We're proud to support this communities' children in their education.

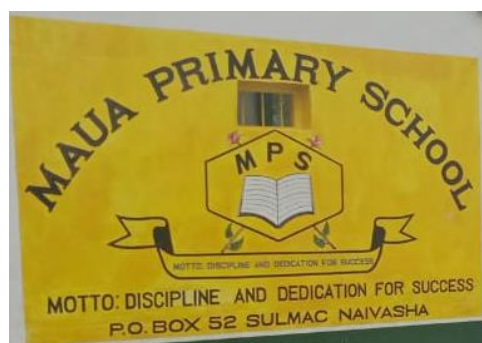
"Today, my heart melts with gratitude looking at what the Co-op has done to our school. The renovation has made me feel contented knowing too well my children are safe at school."

Caroline Wangu, parent at Maua Primary School

"When I joined the Maua Primary School, it was deserted like the desert. In the classrooms there was no electricity."

"What I like most about the school is that its teaching is much better than before and we can even study in the morning because of the electricity. I as a student can tell the Co-op and Flamingo Horticulture that they have increased our interest of learning and the academics of the school has improved."

Wendy Chepkoech, 14-year-old student at Maua Primary School



Climate change & young farmers

In 2019, the global market price for coffee dropped to its lowest since 2003, sparking a global coffee crisis affecting more than 25 million smallholder coffee farmers. Fairtrade farmers are protected from price volatility, thanks to the Fairtrade Minimum Price but the effects of climate change are increasing vulnerability affecting production and yields. As temperatures rise, bugs and diseases such as leaf rust are spreading which is affecting production, yield and incomes. It also means that land suitable for coffee growing is moving to higher altitudes resulting deforestation as land is cleared to plant farms – resulting in further biodiversity loss and soil degradation. By 2050, it is expected that the total area of land suitable for coffee growing will have reduced by 50%.

Coffee farming populations are also aging. In Kenya, most coffee farmers are over 50 years old. This means coffee farming is at stake not just from climate change, but also since most youths have not embraced coffee farming. Mutira Farmers' Cooperative Society, who supply our Co-op Irresistible Kenyan Roast Ground Coffee, are in Kirinyaga county on the slopes of Mount Kenya where rich volcanic soils produce some of the best coffee in the world. The cooperative has been Fairtrade certified since 2004; there are 9786 members of which just 675 are youth.

To tackle the climate crisis and the generation gap, Co-op has supported Fairtrade Africa's East Africa Youth Programme, sought to create more opportunities for the involvement of young people in the coffee value chain. The 6-month project weaved several interventions including training **61 youths** over a 2-month training period on Good Agricultural Practices, coffee nutrition as well as the establishment and management of clonal gardens and nurseries for more climate resilient coffee beans.

200,000 seedlings will be distributed to farmers for the 2021 main season with priority given to youths and women at Mutira Farmers' Cooperative Society. The average production in the cooperative is 10 kilograms of cherry per coffee tree. It is expected that production will increase by 2,000,000 kilograms of cherry over a period 3 years.

"I am encouraging more youth to come into coffee farming because with new varieties that are more resistant to pests and diseases, it is easy and even cheaper to manage it and it will give you good production. My appreciation goes to Coop UK and Fairtrade Africa for encouraging us and taking time to train and encourage youth to get into coffee farming because we are getting a good income at the end of the year with which we are able to do other things, and it is improving our livelihoods."

Nyawira Njiraini, coffee farmer



Coffee | Health in Field | Dos Costas Cooperative, Brazil

Health

The Cooperative Dos Produtores de Café Especial de Boa Esperanza (Dos Costas) is in Brazil in the region of Sur de Minas. Dos Costas supply Co-op's Fairtrade Espresso Beans. The co-operative has 207 members and became Fairtrade certified in 2008.

The socio-environmental criteria of the Fairtrade Standards are an important part of the Fairtrade mechanism. Though most are now prohibited, many coffee producers have been exposed to pesticides and toxic chemicals without any information on how to use them, which has triggered silent diseases. In 2015 it was identified by CLAC, Fairtrade's Latin-Caribbean producer network, that there was a lack of health and safety in the fields and there weren't policies in place to ensure workers were getting health checks, a common problem for small scale farmers.

Dos Costas worked to reduce the use of agrochemicals without diminishing productivity with methods such as monitoring of pests and diseases, intensive management of plant conservation and the reduction of the use of pesticides.

Co-op contributed funding for the project with CLAC to teach small producers the importance of healthcare and wellbeing, including periodic health exams, basic sanitation education and workplace safety. The Health in Field programme offers healthcare professionals to farmers and workers in rural areas with the aim to improve the living conditions of cooperative members. Pesticide poisoning is one of the main health issues in rural areas, and the lack of proper training has caused health problems over the years. The programme works to reduce the use of pesticides and its risks to both the health of workers and the environment, as well as prevent other diseases and injuries related to farming activities and sanitation in rural areas.

The project was a great success and has had some positive results, perhaps most notably the results of the water treatment. Water analysis results from Sept 2019 to 2020 (although in Portuguese!), after the biodigesters were installed, achieving 100% potable water for producers. Despite lockdowns this year, they were able to deliver the planned health & safety 'lectures' via Whatsapp, and this contact via WhatsApp also made it easier for the co-operative management and CLAC to communicate with producers over lockdown regarding Covid spread prevention:

"The Health in Field Project has been extremely important to producers in this moment of insecurity and concern over the Covid-19 pandemic because in addition to the existing actions, we were better able to bring relevant health and safety information and knowledge relating to Covid to our members, through Whatsapp and field visits, in addition to encouraging caring for the health of each other.

We end this stage of the project with immense gratitude to all involved, in the hope that better days will come and the Dos Costas cooperative will continue working towards improving the quality of life of our members"



Sugar | Good Hiring Practices in the Cane Farming Sector | Belize

Workers and Human Rights

We were the first retailer to sell Fairtrade sugar back in 2005 and converted our entire own brand range in 2008. In 2016 we made a commitment that all the bagged sugar (own label and branded) we sold would be Fairtrade certified to support small holder associations in Belize, achieved in collaboration with Tate & Lyle Sugars and Fairtrade.

Cane farming in Northern Belize employs large numbers of seasonal workers, particularly during the sugar cane harvest. These workers are employed by smallholder farmers, typically without written contracts, training or systematic provision for their safety at work. Cane-cutting is a physically strenuous task in often very hot conditions. The cane is typically cut by hand using machetes which presents further occupational hazards for workers.

In 2019-2021 Co-op have been supporting Tate & Lyle Sugars implement a new initiative to address informal employment in Belize and improve working practices for cane cutters in the Belizean sugar industry. The project aims provides a standard method to improve hiring and working practices in the smallholder cane farming sector during harvesting to reduce the risk of forced labour. Enable employers and employees in cane farms to replace word of mouth contracts with written contracts, and training on implementation. An approach was developed with stakeholders including the sugar cane associations (Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association, Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association, Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association, and Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association), Fairtrade, Belize Labour Department and Social Security Board, and piloted to regularise current informal employment practices in the cane fields through the introduction of cost neutral or low cost changes to hiring workers.

The booklet contains a simple pro forma contract outlining payment terms and conditions and information on procedures, training, working hours and health and safety protocol. Protocols for the use of the contracts were developed in consultation with field workers and harvest group leaders through a second series of workshops. Before the start of the crop, a series of “train the trainer” sessions for the cane farmers associations’ directors on Belize labour law, Fairtrade and international standards regarding hiring and managing employees. The directors, in turn, hosted their own workshops with harvest group leaders and field workers.

The contract books were distributed at the start of the 2019/2020 crop to 100 harvest group leaders, who manage a total of 1,000 field workers. We were also pleased to donate PPE, including shin guards and goggles, to help keep fieldworkers safe during the harvest. After the success of the pilot project, the contract books and workshops will be introduced to the rest of the northern Belize sugarcane industry in the 2021.

“This project is an amazing example of what can be achieved through Fairtrade, and through true collaboration between farmers and industry at one end of the supply chain and traders and retailers at the other. The Fairtrade Premium and long-term contracts encouraged by Fairtrade Standards both go a long way in helping farmers gain stability in a challenging industry, however it takes significant time and investment for cane farmers to gain Fairtrade certification. That’s why projects such as this, which goes beyond the minimum requirements of Fairtrade and invest additional time and funds into supply chains, are so vital in bringing about even greater impact and change.”

Sarah Singer, Senior Supply Chain Manager for Sugar at Fairtrade Foundation



“In the industry it is something that information has been lacking in all aspects, and it is time to start to develop –this project is bringing that, especially in the field area. So now we can have a more secure way of working with the cane farmers and the cane cutters”.

Vladimir Puck, Chairman – Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association



Cocoa | COVID-19 Emergency Relief | Cat-Tocache in Peru

Health

When the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading across the world, the welfare of our valued Fairtrade producers and their communities were front of mind. The unprecedented impact of the coronavirus pandemic caused a deflationary spiral in cocoa bean prices which dropped by 28 per cent compared to March.

Today the cocoa sector continues to be impacted by the spread of the disease and as the price of cocoa beans, which has been as high as \$2998 per tonne, continues to fall, it will have significant affect on the livelihood of farmers at the end of the chain.

In a bid to help combat the devastating effects of Covid-19, which could see some of the most vulnerable farmers in the supply chain at risk of being pushed into poverty, the Co-op reallocated funding to Fairtrade producer support, including the Fairtrade International Producer release fund. This included £42,500 from Co-op and its supplier ICAM Chocolate UK Ltd for Cat-Tocache cocoa co-operative in Peru.

Cat-Tocache co-operative are a key supplier of Co-op Irresistible block chocolate. Cat-Tocache used the funds for emergency relief food parcels, essential personal protective equipment (PPE) equipment and medicines for health personnel to treat COVID-19. The principle support provided 415 food kits to co-operative members. Each food kit provided food for 5 dependents (2075 people) for 60 days. The food kit comprised: cereals, sugar, legumes, vegetal oil, vegetables, flour and canned meat.

The PPE and medicines were donated and distributed at three levels: hospitals, home delivery to citizens of Tocache and to the members and workers of the cooperative.

The fund affected directly 7,706 people, both from the cooperative and from the district of Tocache in Northern Peru.

"Representing the farmers of our district we would like to give special thanks to Coop and Icam for all the support they are giving us, it's a great help that enables us to continue our work as farmers."

S.ra Ana Maria Pino Lecca, Presidenta Comité sectorial. Caserío Naranjal

